

**if your offered
hand is still open to
me**

trashmouths (zeficious)

if your offered hand is still open to me by trashmouths (zelicious)

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Alternate Universe - Modern Setting, Angst, Fluff, M/M

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Sonya Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-09-21

Updated: 2017-09-21

Packaged: 2020-01-20 15:54:31

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,115

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Richie's hand runs down Eddie's back soothingly. "Sweetheart, what's wrong?" Richie inquires. He was pulling out the big guns with 'sweetheart'; Eddie was a sucker for sweet pet names, no matter how much he tried to act like he wasn't. But Eddie can't tell him the truth. Can't tell him that he's so terrified of losing Richie that he's trying to make up for lost time before it's even lost. That he misses Richie already, even though he's right in front of him.

Richie gets into a school in Los Angeles and Eddie thinks it spells the end.

if your offered hand is still open to me

Author's Note:

Modern setting (because I didn't have the energy to look up a bunch of niche 90s references) where everyone's alive and nothing bad happens in Derry except that it's small and boring and sucks. The kids are all 18 here since they're graduating but nothing sexual happens between anyone. Title is from Strangers by The Kinks. Also, here's the [fic post](#) on my tumblr which you can reblog if you so please.

After five years, Eddie no longer flinches when a gangly body tumbles through his window and onto his bed in the middle of the night. If he'd been even the slightest bit concerned about who was currently breaking into his room, the cursing under the breath followed by a sloppy kiss to his sleep warm cheek would be a dead giveaway. "You can talk all you want, but I'm going back to sleep," Eddie mumbles into the pillow where he's hiding his grin. He loves it when Richie sneaks over in the middle of the night, curling up behind him and sleeping pressed against his back until morning when he slips out the window again only to walk around to the front door and more or less let himself in. Still, it was best to keep Richie from getting a big (bigger) head.

"Never stopped me before, babe," Richie responds without skipping a beat. He doesn't take his usual spot as the big spoon, instead sitting back against the headboard.

"What's wrong?" Eddie asks through a yawn, turning so that he can settle his head in Richie's lap. Richie's hands immediately tangle themselves in Eddie's hair and Eddie hums contentedly, nearly forgetting his concern as he's lulled to sleep by the gentle scratching at his scalp.

"I've got some big news, Eds," Richie whispers.

"Oh, yeah?" Eddie mumbles. He's expecting something silly; maybe Richie TP'd Stan's house before coming over, or he'd managed to

coerce the rest of the Losers' into going on some big weekend trip. In all honestly, Eddie is only half listening. He's sleepy and warm and Richie is petting that spot behind his ear that feels really nice and he smells good and he's wearing a hoodie that Eddie is definitely going to steal in the morning. He just wants to kiss for a little bit and then go back to bed, but shutting Richie up is more effort than letting him talk, so Eddie humors him.

"Yeah, uh," Richie stammers, jostling his knee nervously. "It's – I'm _"

At this, Eddie sits up himself, ignoring the head-rush that made him a bit dizzy as he watches Richie's face in the dim lighting of the street lamps outside. "Rich? What's going on?" Richie was never nervous, Eddie had enough anxiety for the both of them. The taller was always the still point of Eddie's turning world, so seeing him fidget nervously makes Eddie's heart rise in his throat.

"Richie? Is everything okay?" Eddie asks, feeling his breath start to pick up as he anxiously awaits Richie's answer.

"Aw geez, Eds, it's nothing bad... Look, I didn't tell you earlier 'cuz I did it as kind of a joke, so you can't get mad at me, okay?" Richie whines.

"I'm about to get mad at you if you keep this up," Eddie snaps peevishly, "Just tell me what's going on!"

"I got into USC's film school," Richie blurts in a rush, flinching back afterward as if he expects Eddie to smack him. Eddie sits in stunned silence, his mouth gaping slightly as tries to process the information.

"USC...you mean, Los Angeles USC?" Eddie asks. Richie nods and bites his lip. He looks like a reprimanded child, and Richie was never guilty about anything. Eddie suddenly releases a shrill laugh, startling Richie so badly that he slams his head into the wall behind him.

"Richie, that's amazing! Oh my god!" Eddie gasps. He throws his arms around Richie's shoulders and presses his face against the other boy's cheek, knocking Richie's glasses askew. "I'm so proud of you! Holy shit!"

Slowly, Richie's arms come up to return Eddie's embrace and he buries his face in Eddie's hair. "You're not mad?" he asks quietly.

"Why would I be mad, idiot?" Eddie laughs, leaning back to take Richie's face in his hands.

"I'll have to move to LA," Richie explains. Eddie stiffens. He hadn't even considered that, so overwhelmed with pride and happiness at his boyfriend getting into such a prestigious film school. A prestigious film school that is 3,000 miles away from Maine.

"Oh," Eddie finally says, voice small. Richie frowns and leans down to press his forehead against the smaller boy's.

"We'll figure it out, yeah? We've got plenty of time," Richie whispers. Eddie nods halfheartedly. The taller boy nudges his nose against Eddie's and presses a sweet kiss on his lips, then lays them down and pulls the covers up over them. Eddie burrows his face into the crook of Richie's neck, breathing in his smell and pushing his worries to the back of his mind as he drifts to sleep.

The next morning, Eddie's "Get Richie Out!!!" alarm chimes at 6:45 and he sleepily shoos Richie out the window, giggling when he hears the sound of the other boy crashing into the bushes below. Not even five minutes later he hears the doorbell ring and his mother, who is up for her morning coffee, answering it with an exasperated sigh. "Richard Tozier, sometimes I could swear you sleep on this damn porch," she complains.

"I'd rather sleep in your bed, Mrs. K," Richie chirps back, wide awake from his run in with the bushes. Eddie hears him squawk and he's sure his mother must have smacked him. Sure enough, when he finally comes through the bedroom door he's rubbing the back of his head with a petulant frown.

"Aw, poor baby," Eddie coos, trying to hold back laughter. It bursts from him when he sees leaves stuck to Richie's jeans.

"Yeah, yuck it up, bubble boy," Richie grumbles, pressing his hand

over Eddie's face and shoving his head back into the pillow, which only makes the smaller boy laugh harder. "The things I put up with for love."

Eddie's heart flutters the way it always does when Richie references the fact that he loves him (even though they've been saying it since they were sixteen). He grabs Richie's wrist, pulls his hand away from where it's still against his face, and presses a kiss to his palm. Richie flushes and smiles, small and happy.

"I'd face a thousand of Mrs. K's slaps for you, baby. Hell, in the right spot, I'd probably enjoy it," Richie says.

"Way to ruin a moment, Trashmouth," Eddie deadpans, rolling over to face the wall and tugging the covers up to his neck. Richie yanks the duvet up long enough to slip under and slide up against Eddie's back. He presses hard enough to trap Eddie against the wall, probably in an attempt to annoy him, but Eddie really just enjoys him being so close. Even though they've only got about ten minutes to spare before they need to get ready for school (Richie has his own drawer full of clothes in Eddie's dresser), Eddie allows himself to exist peacefully in this moment with his boyfriend.

You won't have it much longer, a dark voice whispers in the back of his mind. Eddie flinches, remembering Richie's late night confession. He's sure that Los Angeles is just like the movies: big, bright, dangerous, beautiful. Just like Richie. It's where he belongs. And he knows that if Richie goes, he'll never come back to Derry. Not even for him.

"Eds?" Richie questions, having felt Eddie shudder moments before, "You alright?" Eddie rolls to face him and shakes his head, moving his hands to tangle in Richie's wild mess of hair.

"Kiss me," he pleads, desperate for it, burning with it. Richie looks concerned, but obeys, caging Eddie into the corner of his bed with his larger body. Eddie wants to cling to him, sink into him, become attached in a way that will never allow the other boy to be rid of him. He feels like crying, but that would send Richie into near hysteria. He could be as bad as Mrs. Kaspbrak when he thought something was really wrong with Eddie.

Eventually, Eddie pulls away and buries his face in Richie's neck, breathing heavily. Richie's hand runs down Eddie's back soothingly. "Sweetheart, what's wrong?" Richie inquires. He was pulling out the big guns with 'sweetheart'; Eddie was a sucker for sweet pet names, no matter how much he tried to act like he wasn't. But Eddie can't tell him the truth. Can't tell him that he's so terrified of losing Richie that he's trying to make up for lost time before it's even lost. That he misses Richie already, even though he's right in front of him.

"Nothing," Eddie mumbles, lips catching against the warm skin of Richie's neck. "Just cool it with the Bubble Boy references. My mom's gonna get ideas."

Richie laughs, and the tension is broken. They get out of bed and dress quickly, having wasted over fifteen minutes in bed rather than the allotted ten. Eddie's not upset about it as they rush out of the house toward where Richie's parked his car down the block, even though he knows his mother is going to have a fit when she realizes that he left without eating breakfast or taking his vitamins. It's worth it to see the giddy grin on Richie's face as they break several traffic laws speeding to school.

Eddie counts his lucky stars that lunch is a riotous affair. Stan and Richie are continuing an argument that started earlier that week over whether Iron Man or Captain America was in the right (Richie siding with Iron Man and Stan with Captain America), and by now Bill, Ben, and even Mike have been unwittingly roped into it. This gives Eddie cover to pull Bev away without anyone, particularly Richie, noticing.

"What's up, Ed?" Bev is watching the boys out of the corner of her eye, lips curled to hold in a grin at their antics.

"I need some...advice," Eddie begins. Bev shifts her attention fully to him now, her brow furrowing.

"Yeah, of course. Is everything okay?"

Eddie frowns at his shoes. He isn't sure how to explain himself without coming off as clingy or desperate, but out of everyone in the

Losers' Club, Bev is who he trusts most to understand. "Richie got into USC. He wants to move to LA." What he doesn't say is 'and I don't know if I want him to', but Bev doesn't need him to.

"Oh, Eddie," she sighs, stepping forward to wrap him in a hug, "I'm sure it'll work out."

"He won't come back," Eddie whimpers, his voice cracking embarrassingly, "If he goes he won't come back. I know he won't." Bev's frown deepens but she doesn't argue. They all know the truth. Anyone who had the chance to get out of Derry wouldn't look back.

"Would you go with him?" she ventures.

"Of course!" Eddie hisses, not venomously, but passionately. "If he asked, of course I would! But he didn't ask."

"Give him some time," Bev suggests, "He might be nervous about it. I'm sure he'll bring it up eventually."

"You're such a fucking moron, Richie!" Stan's angry shout echoes in the school courtyard, interrupting Bev and Eddie's heart to heart.

"Eddie! Where are you? Come defend my honor!" Richie whines.

"What honor?" Eddie shouts back. He and Bev share a grin as they move back to the group.

It will be fine Eddie thinks, repeating it to himself like a mantra. *It will be fine it will be fine it will be fine.*



After a week of deliberation, Richie confirms that he will be attending USC that coming fall. The Losers celebrate by driving out to a slightly nicer movie theater than the one in Derry and theater hopping until they get caught because Richie got noise complaints from three different showings. Eddie is happy, dizzily happy for

him, but it's getting harder to push away the dark little worrying thoughts that poke at him in quiet moments; thoughts like *he can't wait to leave you*, and *he's going to forget you*. Realistically, Eddie knows it's too early to start planning things, but he thinks that if they're going to be needing to get an apartment in LA, then they should probably start looking soon.

Richie hasn't asked him to come to LA, though. In fact, he doesn't really talk about the inevitable move. As they get closer and closer to graduation, Richie seems to have forgotten that he's going to be leaving at all. Eddie wishes that he could forget too, but every moment that they spend together (which is almost every moment of the day), all Eddie can think about is how it's going to be over soon. And he can't keep living like that. It hurts too much.

"We should spend some time apart," Eddie says one day, a week before graduation, sitting with his legs hanging out Richie's passenger side window as they're parked near the Barrens to eat McDonald's.

"*What?*" Richie shouts, spraying chewed up chicken nuggets onto the dashboard and ignoring Eddie's grimace, "Babe, are you that mad about me eating your french fries? I'll buy you some more, I swear to god."

"No, dumbass." Eddie rolls his eyes. "I mean like, to practice. You know, for when you leave."

"Oh." Richie deflates. "Right. When I leave."

There's a tense silence between them for a few moments, and the mean little voice is shouting inside Eddie's mind, *leave! leave! leave!*

"Bet you can't go a whole day without begging me to come over and give you a cuddle," Richie says smugly, smirking at him from across the car.

"You're on, Tozier," Eddie snipes. After eying Richie's grin in the fading sunlight, he adds "starting tomorrow," and launches himself

across the center console to settle into Richie's lap.

That night he struggles to fall asleep without Richie curled around him, but eventually nods off. In the morning he wakes up at a reasonable time, gets dressed, and eats breakfast silently in the kitchen. It's so eerily quiet in the house without Richie that even his mother seems uncomfortable, looking up from her coffee and book every few minutes like she expects the boisterous boy to come bursting through the door at any second. When he tells her that he'll be needing a ride to school she looks nearly horrified.

"Are you and Richie fighting, sweetheart?" She presses a hand against his forehead, as though a lover's quarrel is a symptom of some larger illness.

"No, Mom," he sighs, twisting his head away. "Richie's just busy this morning, so he can't give me a ride."

"Alright..." she concedes, still sounding wary. He doesn't blame her. He and Richie were attached at the hip long before they started dating three years ago, and even fussy Sonia Kaspbrak had come to bear a grudging sort of affection for the loudmouth. Richie had that affect on people.

The whole drive to school, Eddie's mother keeps glancing at him worriedly, probably expecting him to burst into tears at any moment. Honestly, Eddie feels like he might. He curses his stupid, stubborn pride for goading him into making the bet with Richie in the first place. Eddie already missed the gangly boy terribly when he was right next to him; when he's gone Eddie can barely stand it. Even though he knows he'll be seeing Richie in just a few minutes, although not touching or talking to him, it's as if Richie is already miles and miles away. Eddie is sure he'll go crazy once Richie's really gone.

When he gets to school Richie is already in the Losers' usual hangout spot, chatting with Bev about haircare tips. He and Eddie lock eyes immediately, but Richie is the one to look away first, going back to his conversation with Bev smoothly. Eddie doesn't pretend it doesn't

hurt. *That's how easy it'll be for him when the real deal comes, too*, the nasty voice in his head teases. Luckily, Mike distracts him with some questions about the English homework, and he's able to tear his gaze away.

The rest of the day goes more or less smoothly. The rest of the Losers' pick up on the tension, but wisely don't comment on it. Eddie keeps catching himself moving to go to Richie, pull long arms around himself, rest his head on his shoulder, tug on a stray curl. He wonders if it's as difficult to stay away for Richie. When the final bell rings, Eddie decides he'd rather walk the mile and a half back home than face his mother's pitying glances again. Stan walks with him since he lives just a few blocks further, forgoing his usual ride back with Bill and Ben.

"How are you feeling, Eddie?" Stan asks carefully as they walk at a sedate pace. Although summer is just around the corner, the weather is still quite nice, and neither of them are in any particular rush to get home.

"Like shit," Eddie answers honestly, scrubbing at his face. Stan frowns sympathetically and walks closer to bump his shoulder against Eddie's.

"I don't know what stupid shit Richie's pulling this time," he says, "But he loves you so much, Eddie. Just remember that." Eddie feels tears prickle behind his eyes for what seems like the hundredth time that day, and he feels a rush of affection for Stan so strongly that he stops and throws his arms around the taller boy. Stan hugs him back tightly, both of them aware that once the summer comes and goes, it may never be so easy to be together like this again.

Eddie is able to distract himself for most of the evening. He cleans his room and the kitchen, chats on the phone with Ben about a new documentary on Netflix for about an hour, and catches up on a few episodes of *Shameless*, before flopping onto his bed in defeat near midnight. He stares at his ceiling where there are glow-in-the-dark stars, nearly ten years old now, pasted up over his bed. Richie had helped put them up, teetering precariously on a chair on top of

Eddie's bed. Close to the wall, nearly invisible, a dozen tiny stars form a heart. Even then, as kids, it had always been the two of them.

Now, in the comfort and quiet of his own bedroom, Eddie begins to weep. He buries his face into his pillow, which still smells like Richie's shampoo, and heaves big, shaking sobs that even just a few years earlier would have sent him into a pseudo-asthmatic fit. It feels like his body is going to break apart. He can't imagine being able to enjoy these last few months with Richie by his side while carrying the burden of his future absence on his scrawny shoulders. It's too heavy. Richie loves him, yes, but maybe it's just not enough.

Once the sobbing dies down to sniffles, he reaches for his cellphone and dials Richie's number, pride be damned. He can be embarrassed about it another day. Right now he just wants his boyfriend. Richie picks up before the first ring has even finished, but doesn't speak immediately. For a minute, they both just sit in silence, listening to the other breathe.

Richie is the first one to break the it. "Baby," he mumbles, voice rough and warm as it crackles through the phone. A fresh wave of tears hits Eddie. Richie is only a few blocks away and Eddie's whole body aches for him. "Oh, Eds, don't cry," Richie pleads as soon as he hears, sounding on the verge of tears himself.

"Come over," Eddie begs thickly. Richie hangs up, but Eddie knows it's just because he's rushing to drive over. It's less than five minutes before Richie is climbing through his open window.

"C'mere, little lover." He gathers the small, shaking boy into his arms and presses kisses to his wet face. "I'm sorry. The bet was a dumb idea. Forgive me." Suddenly, Eddie is angry. He shoves Richie backward and sits up, glaring down at the shocked boy.

"It wasn't fucking dumb, Richie. That's gonna be our life! You're going to leave, forever, probably. What's stopping you? Just me. And you'll f-forget about me soon enough. I-I-I can't h-handle that." Eddie is nearly howling, hunched over in his grief. Some small part of him is thankful that his mother is working late that night, or she'd surely call an ambulance at the sound of his fit.

“Oh my god, Eds, don’t say that, *please* don’t say that.” Richie is crying now too, his face contorted in pain as he tries to grab hold of Eddie’s heaving shoulders.

“But it’s true,” Eddie cries. It takes nearly five minutes for the both of them to calm down long enough to speak clearly again. The air between them is cold. Richie is huddled in the corner while Eddie is slumped against the wall at the foot of the bed. “Why don’t you want me to come with you?” Eddie finally asks in a small voice. It had been the question he’d been dreading most, but he needs to know the answer. Maybe hearing it will help him deal with things better.

“What?! Of course I want you to come with me!” Richie is incredulous. The glasses he only wears at night now are about to slip completely off his face from the slick tears coating the sides of his nose combined with the jerky, shocked motion of his head.

“Then why haven’t you asked?” Eddie is still not sure if he believes him.

“I was scared,” Richie admits, looking fourteen again and staring with trepidation at the gate to the high school, anxious about what lay ahead. “I didn’t want to hear you say no. I can’t ask you to sacrifice your life like that for me, Eddie.” He’s looking down at his hands, so he doesn’t get a chance to see the pillow before it smacks into his face.

“You absolute! Fucking! Moron!” Eddie hisses, punctuating each word with a smack of the pillow. Richie almost laughs, because Eddie’s pillows are so ridiculously soft that his blows feel like being gently caressed by a cloud. But he sits in stunned silence. “It wouldn’t be a sacrifice, dumbass!”

“Huh?” Richie’s brain has not quite caught up with the situation.

“Richie, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. You’re it for me. I will follow you wherever you go, all you have to do is ask,” Eddie says somberly, the pillow now laying across his lap.

“Eddie, will you please come to LA with me?” Richie whispers, like he believes that if his voice is too loud then the spell will be broken,

and Eddie will change his mind.

“Duh.”



Mrs. Kaspbrak just about has a heart attack when they break the news to her, but she eventually comes around. She knows Richie Tozier will take good care of her son in her place. They leave in the middle of August. The entire Losers' Club, along with Georgie, Richie's younger sister Marie, and Stan, Mike, and Ben's parents, see them off at the airport, nearly getting kicked out for being too noisy. “Signs are supposed to be for when you pick someone up from the airport, not when they leave,” Eddie complains. Secretly, he loves the huge banner they made for them: LOSERS LOVE YOU!

Their apartment is small, dingy, and in a bit of a sketchy neighborhood, but they both love it. Eddie decorates it (after spending a full two days scrubbing it with Clorox) with posters of cheesy 80s horror movies and photos of the Losers and plants on every surface. Richie begs for a dog, but Eddie thinks it's cruel to keep one cooped up in the apartment, so they get an orange tabby instead and name her Molly. He promises that they can get a dog once they move into a house with a yard.

Richie thrives at school, his bright personality fitting in perfectly. Eddie enrolls in a nursing school nearby and Richie nearly bursts with pride. He sends a dozen pictures of Eddie in his cute pink scrubs to the Losers' group chat every week.

The Losers visit often. Bev comes down the most, since she takes the train from her school in Seattle. Bill and Stan fly down once or twice a year from the University of Chicago. Ben transfers after two years, from community college to USC, to study architecture. Mike stays in Derry to help his family with the farm, but he comes down whenever he saves up enough money, and the Losers' have a joint savings account to help fund his airfare.

Eddie can't imagine a better life. He doesn't even want to.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading! Hope you enjoyed it. I might write some other pieces in this universe.